

New Center Historic District

General boundaries: Virginia Park, Woodward, Lothrop, John C. Lodge Expressway.

Local	v	11/22/82
State		
State Marker		
National	v	2/28/83



Granmont & Birchmont Apts. 112-120 Seward



Historic overview:

Many streets in the New Center area were named after a landowner, subdivider or a famous person. Seward was named in 1860 after William H. Seward, the noted statesman; Pallister was for Thomas Pallister, landowner; and Lothrop after George V. N. Lothrop, City Attorney General, Minister to the Russian Court and real estate entrepreneur. The streets were originally laid out in a straightforward gridiron fashion and were paved with cedar, with the exception of Virginia Park (originally Virginia Avenue), which was paved in brick. Building restrictions were attached to parcels, ensuring that homes on the block closest to Woodward were more expensive than the second and third blocks, and minimum costs were enforced.

West Grand Boulevard became the base line for the New Center commercial development by General Motors and the Fisher Brothers of the 1920s. A retail strip developed on both sides of Woodward Avenue, the eastern boundary of New Center, and prestigious and high-end department stores located within the district. However, the nation and city experienced less prosperous times and racial strife during the late 1960s, and the shift to the suburbs was underway. New Center retained some professional people as residents even after the affluent gradually moved to more prestigious neighborhoods. Yet New Center's popularity declined, and many homes were converted to boarding houses or rental units, convenient for Wayne State University students.

In 1978 General Motors Corporation announced that it was renovating what it called "New Center Commons". A massive revitalization project rerouted streets, constructed pedestrian malls, and rehabilitated buildings. The project created a more upscale neighborhood, and today New Center Commons thrives as a residential area.

